



Immigration Services Division

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Homepages for INS Field Offices

On March 29, 1999, INS Deputy Commissioner Mary Ann Wyrsh issued a memo announcing the expansion of service to INS customers by the enhancement of the current INS website.

The first phase of the enhancement will be the development and publishing of homepages for the five key backlog reduction cities (New York City, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco) and for San Jose, site of the INS' customer service pilot project.

One of the emphases for these homepages will be on facilitating customer access to naturalization-related and other local information. Although there is opportunity for these local offices to include their own special messages and provide additional site specific information, they will all have a common look and feel.

Each local homepage provides basic information about the District Office including an overview, jurisdiction of the district and its suboffices, directions to the office, contact phone numbers, local filing procedures, procedures for checking the status of an application, etc.

Each district office website has electronic links (through hypertext or "hot buttons") to the INS homepage, naturalization website, a list of forms and fees, frequently asked questions, and a list of Application Support Centers (ASCs).

The first six sites will be published in mid-May. INS will publish homepages for all other District Offices during the remainder of FY 1999.

San Jose Pilots Customer Service Initiatives

March's NatzNews reported on the selection of San Jose as the site for an innovative two-year pilot in customer service. The article stated that the pilot will be based on integrating four elements: information-related customer service initiatives; "foundation" improvements that have been articulated as part of the Commissioner's vision; organizational changes within the San Jose sub-office; and naturalization backlog reduction efforts. This edition of NatzNews highlights the information-related customer service initiatives, which are to:

- Establish a "Customer Advisory Board;
- Establish Customer Service Manager position;
- Build and staff a new "Community Room" to include how-to videos, kiosks, and community-based organization (CBO) workshops;
- Improve information room processes and add Immigration Information Officers (IIOs) to increase capacity at the information counter;
- Implement a local Internet webpage;
- Expand and improve the outreach program;
- Implement a comprehensive customer service training program for ALL benefit employees.

Implementation for many of these initiatives has already begun. The Customer Advisory Board (which includes representatives from Congressional staffs, local government, CBOs, and attorneys)

conducted its first monthly meeting on April 19. Classification is underway for the position of a Customer Service Manager. The build-out for the community service room has been approved and the office has applied for the necessary building permits. The San Jose office has selected 9 new Immigration Information Officers who will enter on duty during the 4th Quarter.

In addition, the sub-office has ordered two vehicles for use on mobile routes by information and adjudication officers who visit customers in Salinas, California and other locations. As mentioned in a previous article, San Jose will be one of the first offices to have its own Internet homepage. Finally, the pilot project team is working with a contractor to tailor customer service training to fit the needs of the San Jose staff.

Public response to the pilot has been very positive. Please see next month's NatzNews for an update on the San Jose Customer Service Pilot.

Immigration Services Division (ISD) Pilots Two-Print Identity Verification System

ISD is preparing to pilot a positive identity verification system based upon using two-index fingerprints and a digital photograph to enhance process integrity at several stages of the naturalization process. The goal of this pilot is to determine the suitability of using two-print checks at interview and oath, and search for any previous history an applicant may have with the INS. The multi-phase pilot will take place during the summer at the Newark District Office.

During the pilot, the INS will fingerprint applicants at the Application Support Center (ASC) and again at interview. At the time of fingerprinting at the ASC, applicants will have a digital photograph and two index fingerprints taken in addition to the ten fingerprints for the FBI search. The photograph will be used for identification purposes. Eventually, the digital photograph will also be used to create a digital

naturalization certificate, eliminating the current labor-intensive process in which INS staff cut out a photograph and paste it to the certificate.

The two index fingerprints will be used to check INS databases to ensure applicants do not have a previous history of illegal entries into the United States and are not under removal orders or proceedings. The INS can also compare the two index fingerprints taken at the interview against the fingerprints provided by the applicant at the ASC to confirm identity.

Based on the results of the pilot, the INS will determine whether the two-print positive identity verification system is an efficient method to positively identify applicants. The INS will then determine any future deployment of the system.

In the future, the INS may also take the two index fingerprints at the oath to check the applicant in and out of the ceremony and to ensure the person taking the Oath of Allegiance is the same person who was present throughout the naturalization process. In addition to providing greater integrity at the oath ceremony, the check-in and check-out process is currently quite cumbersome, and automating it could save time for both the INS and applicants. If the INS uses the two index fingerprints to check applicants out at the oath ceremony, this could also be used as a trigger for an automatic case close-out in CLAIMS.

Next CBO Meeting

The next INS/CBO meeting will be June 29, 1999, at 2:00 p.m. in the Shaughnessy Conference Room on the 6th floor at the main INS building (425 "I" Street, NW, Washington, DC).

Organizations that would like to send representatives to the monthly meetings should fax their request to Patricia Stivala, ISD, at 202/514-8853.